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WASHINGTON TIMES
 6 October 1986

U.S. begins new offensive on Soviet disinformation

By Bill Gertz
 THE WASHINGTON TIMES

President Reagan has instructed the State Department to set up an office to monitor and combat worldwide Soviet attempts to discredit U.S. policies by forging documents and supporting political groups, according to a Reagan administration report.

The office, to be called the Office on Disinformation Analysis and Response, is expected to be headed by

Kathleen Baile, currently a deputy assistant secretary of state, according to informed sources.

Ms. Baile heads the State Department's Active Measures Working Group, which compiled the report.

The new office will provide regular public reports on active Soviet propaganda measures, give briefings to foreign and non-government officials and "assure efficient and timely U.S. government responses" to Soviet disinformation, the report states.

"The most significant aspect of the report is that we now have set up an office to monitor disinformation and active measures," said Rep. Newt Gingrich, Georgia Republican.

"It begins to establish the principle that we're going to be aware that some of the reports that the media receives may be active measures. It gives people a place to go to check things out," said Mr. Gingrich, who last year sponsored legislation requiring the unclassified study by the Active Measures Working Group.

The Working Group, while technically part of the State Department, is made up of intelligence officials from State, National Security Council,

the Pentagon, CIA and FBI along with officials of the U.S. Information Agency.

Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence-designate Morton Abramowitz is said to have opposed the new office, while CIA director William J. Casey and White House National Security Council intelligence director Kenneth DeGraffenreidco were among those who favored creating the office, one source said.

Besides explaining the new office, the report also updates previous studies on Soviet "active measures and disinformation."

Stanislav Levchenko, who headed Soviet disinformation operations in Japan for five years until he defected to the United States in 1979, defined "active measures" as attempts to get "lawmakers, journalists, academics and businessmen to adopt policies and attitudes that help promote Soviet expansionist objectives while making them believe that they are doing precisely the opposite." Mr.

Levchenko conducted these operations in Japan with a journalistic cover for his covert activities.

For example, the report charges that the Soviets, through a forged FBI document and a campaign by the Communist Party U.S.A., attempted to derail President Reagan's 1984 re-election bid.

Release of the report last week coincided with a series of published media reports revealing that the Reagan administration authorized a "disinformation program" of its own to destabilize the regime of Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi.

The study also was made public just days before the U.S.-Soviet summit meeting in Iceland that was prompted by a superpower confrontation over Soviet spying at the United Nations and the seizure by the KGB of U.S. journalist Nicholas Daniloff in Moscow.

Some State Department officials objected to releasing the report, fearing it would harm U.S.-Soviet relations prior to the summit, one

source said.

"Active measures" is the Soviet term used to describe covert action to promote Soviet foreign policy and to discredit U.S. initiatives through espionage, propaganda and diplomatic action, the report states.

Disinformation is defined as the use of false or misleading information to influence public opinion or government decision-making, according to the report.

"Deceptiveness is the essence of active measures — disinformation and forgeries, front groups, influence operations, media manipulation and clandestine radio broadcasts," the report says.

The programs are carried out by the Soviet KGB intelligence service in close coordination with the Soviet Communist Party Secretariat's International Department, the report says.

One senior U.S. intelligence official said active measures and disinformation have intensified under Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

"They are the hallmark of the Gorbachev regime," the official said.

The report also states that the entire propaganda apparatus of the Soviet Union was revamped earlier this year when former Soviet ambassador to the United States Anatoly Dobrynin was placed in charge of the International Department.

"With these changes, it is quite possible that not only the quantity of active measures and propaganda will increase, but also the quality and sophistication," the report states.

Under Mr. Gorbachev, the Soviets have begun a new policy of "accessibility" to the Western press to get the Soviet point of view across. That accessibility involves frequent press conferences, appearances by Soviet spokesmen such as Georgi Arbatov and Vladimir Posner, the report states.

Soviets officials also have gained access to foreign media through some foreign journalists in Moscow. "For many foreign journalists, re-

porting in a Soviet-biased or pro-Soviet manner can result in gaining access to otherwise inaccessible Soviet officials," the report states.

The Soviets also use "controlled leaks" to Soviet agents, such as KGB agent and mouthpiece" Viktor Luis, who provide information to Western correspondents that the Soviets want publicized, the report states.

The report contains some of the first declassified FBI data on so-called agents of influence — described as "individuals who support and promote Soviet interests, either openly or covertly."

"Agents of influence are motivated by a variety of factors," the report says. "Some may be blackmailed, but many support the U.S.S.R. for other reasons such as ideological affinity, ego, political expediency or financial reward."

CIA estimates place the dollar amount spent by the Soviets on active measures, both covert and overt, at \$3 billion to \$4 billion annually.